

Pure, Reflective, Luminous Matter

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2016-04-25

Source: <http://www.shiningworld.com/site/satsang/read/2692>

Jason: Hello, Sundari, I hope your travels are well, and you and James are enjoying your *satsangs*.

I'm starting to learn to let go and see that *Bhagavan* has me exactly where he needs me – and can provide for me fabulously without me interfering, scheming or worrying... he he he he. ☺

Sundari: Hello, Jason, good to hear from you. We have had a great trip, thank you. We are having a break in Portugal before returning to the U.S. next week. I am happy for you that the knowledge is working for you – as James always says, “It is far easier to let *Isvara* do your life than to rely on the *jiva!*” So true.

Jason: So, on to my question. In addition to James' teachings, I love Swami Dayananda. His stuff deepens what I read and listen to from James. However, in his book *Action and Reaction* he talks about *purusha* and *prakriti*.

He says *purusha* is the “person,” which I take to be the self, and *prakriti* is the personality. Is that correct?

Sundari: This is based on *yoga* terminology, and *yoga* is basically duality. And yet the *purusha/prakriti* teaching is also used in the *Gita* because it fits with the nature of the teaching, which is a *purana*, presenting Vedic ideas in allegorical form. *Purusha* means “original consciousness” and it is a person with reference to objects, but as the universal, not individual, person, so it is actually *Isvara* appearing as a “supreme being.” *Prakriti* is all the objects and/or three *gunas* as well as the individual *jiva*/subtle body, or *jivatman*.

Jason: He says, “*Prakriti* has threefold powers: *jnana-sakti*, the power to know, including memory; *icha-sakti*, the power to will, including desire, doubt, emotions; and *kriya-sakti*, the power to act, including skill, creativity, power and so on.”

Sundari: Yes, correct.

Jason: Where I'm confused is that I haven't heard James talk about this and wonder if what James calls the subtle body (or the mind, ego and intellect) is just *prakriti* playing itself out...

Sundari: James has often talked about this; perhaps you have not come across it. I recommend you read his book *Inquiry into Existence*. It is explained in depth there.

You are correct. *Prakriti* is basically *maya*/the three *gunas*. It is the mirror of matter, which is consciousness plus matter. *Prakriti* evolves but *purusha* does not. In its original state, *prakriti* is just pure, reflective, luminous matter.

Jason: ...or is this something different?

Sundari: The terms *Isvara*, *maya* and *prakriti* are all synonyms, but they are slightly different. *Isvara* is awareness associated with *maya* in the role of Creator; *maya* is that which (apparently) deludes awareness into identifying with objects. *Prakriti* is the nature or substance, the creation – made up of subtle and gross matter. There is no point in talking about the difference between them, because *prakriti* does not mean anything without *maya*. They are the same but they are not. *Isvara* associated with *maya* is independent of *prakriti* because *Isvara* is *trigunaatita*, beyond the *gunas*. *Prakriti* depends on *Isvara/maya*, but *Isvara* as pure consciousness gives rise to creation with the help of *maya* but is always free of the creation.

Jason: Also, what role do the three *gunas* and *vasanas* play in this?

Sundari: The three *gunas* give rise to everything in creation, all the objects subtle and gross, as stated above. This includes the *vasanas*.

Jason: Because Swamiji says the *purusha* presides over the *prakriti*, which makes it almost sound like an object more than the subject, the self.

Sundari: No, you have it wrong. *Purusha* is the subject, the Higher Principle, or *satya* – that which is real, meaning always present and unchanging, giving rise to all the objects but independent of them. *Prakriti* is the object, or “lower” principle, or *mithya*, that of the apparently real – not always present, and always changing.

Jason: Any help clarifying would be greatly appreciated.

~ Best, Jason

PS: After reading your article on vegetarianism, I bought *Nourishing Traditions* and I have radically changed the ol' *jiva* diet... finally, I feel like this once out-of-control area is peacefully resolved, thank you.

Sundari: I am very happy to hear that, Jason! There is so much misinformation and disinformation in the media about the rules that constitute good health, it is really confusing and difficult to work out what the truth is. Add that to the ideas about diet that prevail for many spiritual people and you have a recipe for a lot of ill health!

~ Love, Sundari